

Abroad

Tokyo

The Japanese Crunch

Japan's success in international markets at the expense of Western industrial nations has become an urgent topic of discussion between Japan and the West. Both in the European Common Market and in the United States, Japanese exports in a score of fields are increasingly blamed for recession and unemployment, and the specter of 1930s-style protectionism is being openly invoked. Few Western nations think that Japanese efforts so far at limiting exports or opening domestic markets to foreign goods have been serious or effective. A senior Japanese politician told the British, for example, that the solution was for Japanese investment in Britain to provide local employment. But, he was told, there are 25 Japanese factories in Britain already, the highest investment level in any country in the EEC, and last year the UK's trade deficit with Japan rose by 10.5 per cent, to \$2 billion. The French Trade Minister told the Japanese that a "customs happening" would befall Japanese goods in the French market if there were no action taken in respect to European trade grievances. The Japanese for their part would like to satisfy their trading partners without losing the competitive advantages they have worked so hard to establish since the end of the Second World War, but they do not want to play the role of scapegoat for the Western countries' economic mistakes. Nevertheless it is clear that Japanese leaders of all viewpoints see the economic connection with the West as the bedrock of their policy and their prosperity. Their great fear is protectionism as a conditioned reaction. "Protectionism could exist for a while," says respected political figure Masumi Esaki. "But it is just like opium—the wish for more would increase. This would only result in retaliation, making it a serious political issue."

Marseilles

Worse Habits

The use of heroin has jumped by an alarming two-thirds this year in France, largely among the unemployed, according to French narcotics-control officials. The type of heroin in commonest circulation is an inferior grade known as "number three," less refined than that usually produced for export from the Golden Triangle, and mixed with such additives as caffeine. Police think that the new substance comes from recently opened laboratories in Thailand or Malaysia. Most arrests for use of and traffic in heroin have been made among the ranks of factory workers and the unemployed. In the first three months of this year, 664 unemployed were taken into custody, twice as many as in the same period last year. One hopeful sign is that the number of overdoses has fallen—36 cases of death from drugs in the first three months of 1982 compared to 41 for 1981.

Paris

The Commune Again

The opening shots in the battle of Paris have been reverberating around the *boulevards* and, although no blood has yet been shed, the fray promises to be fierce. The battle this time is over the proposal by President François Mitterrand's Socialist government to make each of the city's twenty *ar-*

rondissements into separate and equal communes—just like Paris itself and every other city, town, and village in France. The idea is supposedly a follow-through on the government's proclaimed policy of decentralization of administrative power. But the mayor of Paris, the peppery Gaullist Jacques Chirac, doesn't see it that way. He, and many other Frenchmen, view it as a declaration of war against his authority, which he exercises well and cheerfully. Chirac has, in fact, become the leading opposition figure in the country, around whom a wide range of conservative and centrist forces have united against the Mitterrand government. If the *arrondissements*, which have been compared roughly to precincts, were to be turned into self-governing units, the power of the mayor would be greatly reduced, and conflict and confusion would, it is feared, invade the city administration. "I cannot believe that the government is seriously contemplating this project," Chirac commented. "It would split Paris into pieces and would increase the costs of running the city considerably." Chirac added that the plan "is totally contrary to the formal undertaking made by the president and the government ministers during the parliamentary debate on decentralization." But that was evidently before Chirac had emerged as the major political target of the Socialist Party. He is perceived, much more than former President Giscard d'Estaing, as Mitterrand's competition next time around.

Canberra

Put Out Another Flag

A plan to remove the Union Jack from the Australian flag is causing a rumpus on this continent. The Australian Labor Party voted at a recent congress to design a new flag in time for the Australian bicentennial celebrations in 1988. This means in practice the elimination of the symbol of Britain in the upper left-hand corner of the banner. The rest of the flag consists of a dark blue ground patterned with the white stars of the Southern Cross. The Laborites would also ditch the present national anthem, which is the British "God Save the Queen," in an attempt to "decolonialize" the Australian national image. Conservative Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser reacted quickly and disapprovingly. "I would have thought," he said, "that Australians overwhelmingly would have enormous pride in the Australian flag. It's a flag a very large number of Australians have fought under for the liberty of Australia and peace in the Free World . . ."



Harris, Canada

Rothco

"It must be just around one of these corners!"

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